

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MEXICO 01043 270000Z

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MEXICO 1043

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR

SUBJ: REGIONAL STUDY ON CONVENTIONAL ARMS SUPPLY RESTRAINTS

REF: STATE 015423

1. AS DATA READILY AVAILABLE IN DEPARTMENT ON CONVENTIONAL ARMS PURCHASES BY MEXICO WILL REVEAL, IF ALL LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES FOLLOWED MEXICAN PATTERN, THERE WOULD BE NO NEED FOR USG TO SEARCH FOR MEANS OF RESTRAINING ARMS TRAFFIC.

2. MEXICAN ARMS PURCHASES, INVARIABLY RELATED TO REPLENISHMENT OF PRESENT HOLDINGS, CANNOT EVEN BE CHARACTERIZED AS MINIMAL, IN THAT HOLDINGS IN MAJOR ITEMS (E.G., AIRCRAFT, TANKS, ARTILLERY) ARE BY COMPARISON WITH OTHER LATIN COUNTRIES EXTREMELY SMALL AND LARGELY OBSOLESCE. NAVAL PATROL CRAFT PURCHASES IN RECENT YEARS ARE CLEARLY INTENDED TO SUPPLY MEXICAN LOS VIEWS (200-MILE EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONE) AND CAN HARDLY BE CONSIDERED OFFENSIVE ARMAMENT.

3. MEXICAN MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT IS CLEARLY AND WILLINGLY SUBORDINATE TO CIVILIAN LEADERSHIP WHOSE POLICY HAS BEEN AND IS TO EXERCISE SEVERE SELF-RESTRAINT IN ARMS PURCHASES, EVEN WHILE AUTHORIZING MODERATE INCREASE IN SIZE OF
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 MEXICO 01043 270000Z

MEXICAN ARMED FORCES. WE SEE NO SIGNS THAT THIS POLICY

WILL VARY IN FORESEEABLE FUTURE; IT IS BASED ON FACT THAT MEXICO PERCEIVES NO MILITARY THREAT FROM NEIGHBORS AND THAT RULING ESTABLISHMENT YEARS AGO CO-OPTED MILITARY TO THE EXTENT THAT MILITARY DO NOT AGITATE FOR ARMS MODERNIZATION.

4. FOLLOWING COMMENTS ADDRESS SPECIFIC POINTS CONTAINED IN PARA 2, REFTEL: (1) MEXICAN POLICY WOULD SUPPORT REGIONAL ARMS RESTRAINT ARRANGEMENTS UNDER CERTAIN CONDITIONS (SEE BELOW). MEXICO'S OWN EXAMPLE OF MODERATION WOULD CONSTITUTE STRONGEST FACTOR IN FAVOR OF SUCH RESTRAINT. (2) WE CAN FORESEE NO OBSTACLES WHICH MEXICO WOULD INTERPOSE TO REGIONAL ARMS RESTRAINTS. (3) WITH RESPECT TO SUB-REGIONAL APPROACHES, MEXICO WOULD GEOGRAPHICALLY FIT BEST WITH CENTRAL AMERICA, BUT MIGHT BALK AT SUCH GROUPING DUE TO DISPARITY IN SIZE, POPULATION -- IF NOT ARMS HOLDING. OF MEXICO MIGHT FIT WITHIN CARIBBEAN GROUPING BUT THIS WOULD SEEM TO LACK MEANING UNLESS CUBA INCLUDED. PERHAPS SOME CONSIDERATION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO ENCOURAGING THE EXPANSION OF THE NUCLEAR ARMS PROSCRIPTION ORGANIZATION (OPANAL) INTO THE CONVENTIONAL ARMS AREA. (4) ANY MOVE TOWARD REGIONAL ARMS RESTRAINT WHICH CLEARLY LED BY U.S. WOULD LIKELY MEET SOME RESISTANCE FROM MEXICO. GOM HAS BEEN LEADER, UNDER ECHEVERRIA ADMINISTRATION, IN URGING LATIN AMERICAN UNITY VIS-A-VIS U.S. THIS TENDENCY RELATES PRIMARILY TO ECONOMIC ISSUES BUT CARRIES OVER INTO POLITICAL ARENA AS WELL. MOREOVER, GOM (AND PARTICULARLY PRESENT FOREIGN SECRETARY ALFONSO GARCIA ROBLES) HAS PLAYED TROUBLESOME GADFLY ROLE IN ORGANIZING THIRD WORLD SUPPORT FOR DEMANDS (FREQUENTLY UNREALISTIC) THAT NUCLEAR POWERS TAKE PROMPT AND DRASTIC MEASURES TOWARD DISARMAMENT. MEXICO HAS ALSO PRESSED USG TO SIGN PROTOCOL I OF TREATY FOR PROSCRIPTION OF NUCLEAR ARMS IN LATIN AMERICA. THUS IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT IN RESPONSE TO ANY US-LED MOVE TOWARD RESTRAINTS ON CONVENTIONAL ARMS TRAFFIC IN REGION MEXICO WOULD COUNTERPROPOSE THAT U.S. AND OTHER POWERS SIMULTANEOUSLY AGREE TO RESTRAIN OR REDUCE ARMS HOLDINGS. TO SUMMARIZE: MEXICO WOULD PROBABLY SUPPORT REGIONAL ARMS RESTRAINT ARRANGEMENTS, DEPENDING UPON MODE OF PRESENTATION OF PROPOSAL, BUT IF U.S. TOOK LEAD, GOM MIGHT WELL INTRODUCE TROUBLESOME EXTRANEIOUS PROPOSAL.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 MEXICO 01043 270000Z

(5) WE HAVE NO BASIS FOR EVALUATING APPEAL TO GOM OF VARIOUS CITED ARRANGEMENTS; OUR IMPRESSION IS THAT "DISARMEMENT" AND "NON-ACQUISITION" WOULD HAVE STRONGEST PSYCHOLOGICAL APPEAL.

5. REGARDING PAR 3 REFTEL, WE MUST INTRODUCE ONE PAROCHIAL BUT IMPORTANT CONCERN. MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROVIDED TO MEXICO BY THE USG CONSISTS ESSENTIALLY OF A \$100 THOUSAND TRAINING PROGRAM. THIS FUND, FRUGALLY AND

EFFECTIVELY UTILIZED (FOR TRAINING, NOT ARMS) HAS PROVIDED THE PRIMARY BASE FOR U.S. INFLUENCE UPON THE MEXICAN MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT. YET FROM TIME TO TIME, CONSIDERATION IS GIVEN TO REDUCING THIS COMPARATIVELY INSIGNIFICANT AMOUNT. WE HOPE THAT IT WILL NOT BE CUT BELOW THE PRESENT LEVEL.

6. REGARDING PARA 4 REFTTEL, FOR REASONS DISCUSSED ABOVE, WE DO NOT CONSIDER THAT INDUCEMENTS OR INCENTIVES ARE NEEDED TO ENCOURAGE ARMS RESTRAINT BY MEXICO.

7. FINALLY, THE COMMENTS AND JUDGEMENTS MADE ABOVE ARE PREDICATED ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT THE NEW MEXICAN ADMINISTRATION TAKING OFFICE IN DECEMBER 1976 WILL CONTINUE TO FOLLOW TRADITIONAL POLICES OF RESTRAINT AND MODERATION ON ARMS PURCHASES. WE SHOULD POINT OUT, OF COURSE, THAT A CHANGE IN THESE PATTERNS, THOUGH CONSIDERED MOST UNLIKELY, CANNOT BE RULED OUT ABSOLUTELY.
THOMPSON

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